

وَمَا كَانَ لَهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ سُلْطَانٍ إِلَّا لِنَعْلَمَ مَنْ يُّؤْمِنُ بِالْآخِرَةِ مِمَّنْ هُوَ مِنْهَا فِي شَكٍّ

“And Satan indeed found his calculation true concerning them, for they follow him, all save a group of true believers. And he had no warrant whatsoever against them, save that We would know him who believes in the Hereafter from him who is in doubt thereof” (*Saba* 20-21). The meaning is that Satan has no means of mastery over them, either through proofs against them or through any power over them. And Satan, himself, recognizes that fact as one can see in the following verse,

قَالَ رَبِّ بِمَا أَغْوَيْتَنِي لَأُزَيِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ  
وَلَأُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٣٩﴾ إِلَّا عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمُ الْمُخْلَصِينَ

“He [Satan] said: My Lord! Because you have sent me astray, I verily shall adorn the path of error for them in the earth, and shall mislead them every one, save such of them as are your perfectly devoted slaves” (*al-Hijr* 39-40).

His mastery is over those humans and jinn who are pleased with his ideas and those who are pleased to follow and obey him. Allah has said,

إِنَّ عِبَادِي لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَانٌ إِلَّا مَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْغَاوِينَ

“Lo! As for My slaves, you have no power over any except such of the froward as follow you” (*al-Hijr* 42). On the Day of Resurrection, Satan will say to those who followed him in this world to misguidance and destruction,

وَمَا كَانَ لِيَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّنْ سُلْطٰنٍ اِلَّا اَنۡ دَعَوْتُكُمْ فَاَسْتَجِبْتُمْ

لِي

“[Lo! Allah promised you a promise of truth; and I promised you, then failed you.] And I had no power over you save that I called unto you and you obeyed me. I cannot help you, nor can you help me” (*Ibraheem* 22). And another verse says,

اِنَّمَا سُلْطٰنُهُۥ عَلٰى الَّذِيۡنَ يَتَوَلَّوْنٰهُ وَالَّذِيۡنَ هُمْ بِهٖ

مُشْرِكُوۡنَ

“His power is only over those who make him an ally, and those who ascribe partners to Allah” (*al-Nahl* 100).

His mastery over them is through seduction and misguidance. He agitates and stirs them and leads them to disbelief and polytheism. He harasses them until they enter into it. And he never leaves them alone. Allah says in the Quran,

اَلَمْ تَرَ اَنَّا اَرْسَلْنَا الشَّيْطٰنِيۡنَ عَلٰى الْكٰفِرِيۡنَ تَوَزُّؤُهُمۡ اَرْۗا

“Do you not see that We have set the devils on the disbelievers to confound them with confusion” (*Maryam* 83).

His power over them is not due to any proofs or arguments but is simply because the actions that he calls them to are in accordance with their own desires and wishes. They have harmed themselves. They allow their true enemy, Satan, to become their friend and master because they are in agreement with what he wants from them. When they stretch their hands to him, they become his prisoner as a type of punishment for their own acts. Allah did not give Satan power over any of his slaves until the slave himself opened the way for Satan by obeying him and associating

him with Allah. Then Allah allows Satan to subjugate the slave and have power over him.

## **He has power over the believers due to their sins**

A hadith states, “Allah is with the judge as long as he does not commit any injustice. If he commits any injustice, Allah is free from him and keeps Satan with him.”<sup>1</sup>

Abu al-Faraj ibn al-Jauzi has related a unique story from al-Hassan al-Basri. The story, depending on how authentic it is, shows the ability of a human in overpowering Satan if he is sincere to Allah in his religion and it shows how Satan can take advantage of the human when he strays. Al-Hasan al-Basri narrated that there was a tree that was worshipped instead of Allah. One man decided to chop down that tree. He was going to chop down the tree out of anger for the sake of Allah. On the way to the tree he met Iblees who was in the form of a man. Iblees asked him, “What do you plan on doing?” The man answered, “I am going to chop down that tree that is worshipped instead of Allah.” Satan said, “If you do not worship it, why should it harm you if others do so?” The man replied, “I will chop it down.” Satan then told him, “Would you like something better than that? Do not cut it and you will get two dinars every morning under your pillow.” “From where will I get that?” the man asked. “I will give it to you,” said Iblees. The man returned and the next morning he found two *dinars* under his pillow. The following morning he again found two *dinars* under his pillow. On the following morning he did not find anything. He got upset and went to chop down the tree. Satan again appeared to him in the shape of the same man. Satan asked him, “What do you want to do?” The man answered, “I plan on cutting down that tree that is worshipped instead of Allah!” Iblees said, “You have lied. There is no way you will be able to do it.” The man left to chop it down. The earth swallowed him and choked him until it almost killed him. Iblees asked, “Do you know who I am? I am Satan. I met you for the first time when you were angry for the

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<sup>1</sup> This was recorded by al-Haakim and al-Baihaqi with a *hasan* chain. See al-Albani, *Sabih al-Jaami*, vol. 2, p.130.